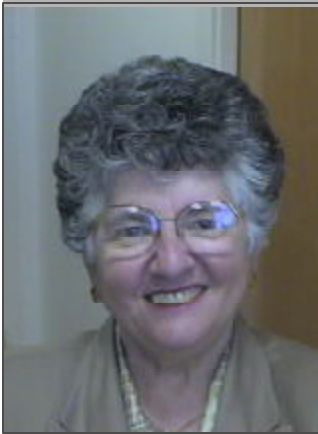


# Spotlight on District Four

*June, 2000*



## ***Dear Neighbors...***

This year has been a truly extraordinary one for our County and for District Four communities. Our neighborhoods continue to be safe, livable and vibrant places. With our flourishing economy, our businesses have grown and prospered as well.

This year, the Council set clear priorities in the \$2.62 billion operating budget and \$1.7 billion six-year capital improvements program: better schools, safe communities, preserving open spaces for future generations, improving traffic and protecting our less fortunate and vulnerable citizens. My only regret was that the Council did not support an income tax reduction. I believe that in this good economy there should have been room in the budget for tax relief. I will continue to push for a tax cut.

As you read this, the Management and Fiscal Policy (MFP) Committee, which I chair, has already begun review of Comcast's request to assume the CTM cable franchise from Prime Communications. You may have read about the many recent community complaints regarding cable service. We will be doing a thorough review of this pending transfer.

As you may have noticed, our newsletter has a new look. Thanks to technology, we can give you a better looking product at a similar cost. I welcome your reactions.

Above all, your continued comments and correspondence to my office help me with some of the most important decisions affecting our communities. Please keep the e-mails and letters coming. And, thank you all for another year of support.

Sincerely,

Marilyn J. Praisner  
Councilmember

## **Schools Win Big**

Schools got top billing this year. The Council boosted the school system's operating budget by over 10 percent. This will make it possible for MCPS to hire over 1,400 new teachers, launch new reading and math initiatives, expand all-day kindergarten at selected schools and reduce class size in reading and algebra classes. The Council added nearly \$12 million in special initiatives, which includes a totally revamped teacher training and evaluation system.

This year's six-year capital improvements budget adds almost \$700 million for a variety of school projects. This includes funding for 11 new elementary school gyms over the next six years. I am very pleased we were able to restore these gyms, which were not included in the County Executive's proposed budget. School gyms have long been a high priority for me and I will continue to press for gyms in all elementary schools. Perhaps the best news for our District is the reopening of Northwood High School, tentatively scheduled

for either September, 2003 or 2004. Faced with severe overcrowding in both the Blair and Einstein clusters, the



Council signed off on a plan to reopen Northwood as part of a new consortium to include Kennedy, Einstein and Blair High schools. The consortium will feature signature programs for all the schools and a student assignment plan patterned after the preferred choice model of the Northeast Consortium.

The Board of Education also plans to develop a signature program for Wheaton High School and may include Wheaton as they consider programming for the new consortium. Much planning remains to be done and it is critical that affected communities take an active role in shaping the plan.

On track for construction are the Wheaton High School and Weller Road Elementary additions, as well as modernizations for Rockville High School, Wood and Parkland Middle Schools, and Cannon Road, Galway and Page Elementary Schools.

## Closed Schools

Last fall, the Council passed legislation tightening County oversight of closed schools, both for leases and sales. In the coming months, the Management and Fiscal Policy Committee, which I chair, will review the regulations for accomplishing this oversight.

## Other School Highlights...

### Paint Branch High School

Paint Branch High School, recently named as a U.S. Blue Ribbon High School for 2000, is also one of 10 “leading-edge” schools in the country chosen as a New American High School.

After the County Executive recommended cutting Paint Branch’s signature program, the Council restored it by adding \$405,000 for improvements to the laboratory and electrical upgrades and access ramps for the science and media signature programs.

### Burtonsville Elementary School

Construction on the long-awaited access road to the school will start this summer, with completion expected by the end of the year. Best of all, this project includes a traffic signal at the new entrance at the intersection of MD 198 and Old Columbia Pike. This is a project I have been pushing the state on for several years.

### Burnt Mills Elementary School

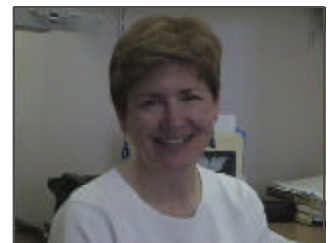
Construction of the new gymnasium is underway and should be ready for use when school opens in the fall.

### Kennedy High School

Community concerns about the traffic situation prompted the Department of Public Works and Transportation to improve signs around the school. Changes in traffic flow are still needed and I will continue to press the Department to resolve these issues before school opens in the fall.

### Meet Pat Brennan...

*Pat specializes in education issues for the Praisner Office. She works part-time. If you have any questions, concerns or comments about the Montgomery County Public School System or a particular school in District 4, please call Pat at (240) 777-7824.*



# Out and About...

I am very pleased to report that the Mid-County will be home to a new recreation center come 2006 and either White Oak or Kemp Mill will be getting a new center as well! This coming year, the County will choose a site in White Oak or Kemp Mill with construction scheduled to begin in 2008, one year earlier than originally planned. Design on the Mid-County center is slated to begin in 2003. I will keep you updated on the progress of both centers.



Also, the East County will be getting a water spray park for children at Good Hope Community Center in time for next summer.

Music lovers will also be able to enjoy the 2,000-seat performing arts and education center at Strathmore Hall, slated to begin hosting the Baltimore Symphony in Spring 2004. The state will share half the \$89 million cost for the center with the County. Because the Council is concerned about costs, it capped the County's contribution to the current estimated construction cost.

The Council earmarked another \$52 million for parks, featuring more ball fields and the Countywide Trails Plan. This month, Park & Planning will start assessing the natural surface trails in Fairland Park for improvements. Also, work on a bike trail to connect the Sligo Creek bike trail to Wheaton Regional Park will begin this month. Facility planning on the Paint Branch hiker/biker trail begins in 2003.

Another bit of good news is that renovation of Calverton/Fairland Park is wrapping up and it will open this month.

Preserving green space in Montgomery County for the enjoyment of all citizens and future generations was a priority this year. The Council set aside \$33 million for the Legacy Open Space initiative, which is expected to be supplemented



by \$9 million in private funds, to identify undeveloped land for protection. This is \$15 million more than proposed by the County Executive.

Brookside Gardens will see significant maintenance improvements this year, including enhanced lighting. Also, facility planning will begin this year for improvements at North Four Corners Park and for two ball fields at Blake High School. Facility planning for Airy Hill Park (adjacent to Paint Branch High School) will start in 2006.

# Getting Around District Four...

Efforts to reduce congestion, improve mobility and increase safety are taking shape all over District 4. The Council voted to decrease the cost of Ride-On bus passes by 44 percent to encourage transit use and help ease traffic congestion. We plan to work with the Wash-



ington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority for similar reductions for Metro buses operating in Montgomery County.

## District 4 Road Improvements Include:

**Robey Road** - is being rebuilt from the north end of the Greencastle Elementary School site to Greencastle Road (approximately 3,400 feet). The entire road will reopen in December 2000.

**Norbeck Road Extended** - This 2.95 mile long roadway extension will connect with Spencerville Road at New Hampshire Avenue and is due to open in Winter, 2003. During construction, Norwood Road will be closed for 11 months from July 2001 until May 2002. I have been working with the Department to minimize the impact of this project on neighborhoods and Blake High School while not cutting back on safety.

**MD 182/Layhill Road @ Norwood Road** - The State Highway Administration (SHA) expects to begin intersection reconstruction in August 2000.

**Old Columbia Pike, Phase 1 & 2** - sidewalk construction from Nalls Lane to Spencerville Road (MD 198) has begun with utility relocation. Unfortunately, this is taking much longer than it should have. Phase 2 from Nalls Lane to East Randolph Road will be completed in 2003.

**Briggs Chaney Road East of US 29** - The road will be widened from US 29 east to Gentry Ridge Court. Construction is expected to be completed in Fiscal Year 2004.

**Greencastle Road** - reconstruction from 400 feet south of the Robey Road intersection to Greencastle Ridge Terrace (approximately 2,100 feet). Construction is expected to begin in 2005. I am continuing to work with the transportation department regarding safety on this road.

**US 29 Sidewalks** - The County will soon build continuous sidewalks where gaps exist on US 29 between University Boulevard and Prelude Drive. The east side of Lockwood Drive between US 29 and New Hampshire Avenue will also get a new sidewalk where there is currently none. This project includes the construction of retaining walls to reduce the impacts to properties adjacent to the right of way.

**The State Highway Administration (SHA) is also planning to improve the following intersections:**

**US 29 @ Randolph Road** - SHA has planned a Public Information Meeting on this project for June 29 at Paint Branch High School, 5:30-8:00 p.m. Construction is planned to begin in 2002.

## Meet Sherry Kinikin...

*Sherry specializes in transportation, environment, public safety and Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission issues. If you have any questions, concerns or comments about roads, solid waste, environment or public safety in District 4, call Sherry at (240) 777-7922.*



**US 29 @ MD 198/Blackburn Road** –A grade separated interchange at relocated US 29 and MD198 is also in project planning. This project, including the Blackburn Road intersection, is also funded for construction to begin 2002.

**US 29 @ Briggs Chaney Road** – Construction on this grade-separated interchange is planned for Summer 2003.

**MD185/Connecticut Ave. @ Veirs Mill Road, Veirs Mill Road @ Aspen Hill Road and Veirs Mill Road @ Randolph Road** are funded for intersection reconstruction and scheduled to begin in 2004.

Projects being studied for intersection improvements are:

- MD 97/Georgia Ave. @ MD 28/Norbeck Ave.
- MD 97/Georgia Ave. @ Randolph Road

Projects funded for final design but not funded for construction are:

- US 29 at Musgrove Road
- US 29 at Fairland Road
- US 29 at Stewart Lane
- US 29 at Tech Road
- US 29 at Greencastle Road

## Heads Up...

The best time for citizen involvement is in the early planning stages. The following County road projects are coming up in District 4:

**Fairland Road** – Planning and preliminary engineering have begun for the reconstruction of Fairland Road east of US 29 to Briggs Chaney Road. The project manager is James Simkins. He can be reached at (240) 777-7198.

**Thompson Road** – Facility planning and preliminary engineering are proposed for connecting Thompson Road and Rainbow Drive in accordance with the Cloverly Master Plan. Connection will not occur before Norbeck Road extended is open to traffic. Additionally, prior to the connection, cut-through traffic in the area will be studied and, if needed, traffic calming devices such as circles and humps will be installed.

**Burtonsville Local Access Road** - Project planning and preliminary engineering will begin shortly for a



new access road to the Burtonsville business district on the north side of MD 198. This road will be an extension of the new Burtonsville Elementary School road and will “loop” around behind the shopping center.

**White Oak Transit Center** – Facility work is just beginning on this project. This transit center involves six bus bays and an approximately 500-space parking lot and will serve as a major transfer location for the eastern county. The scope of work for this project includes site selection and preliminary engineering design. Call Rob Klein (240) 777-7195 with any questions.

## FDA Update...

With federal funding in place for the Federal Drug Administration’s (FDA’s) relocation to the New Hampshire Avenue site, we are now assured this move will become a reality. Groundbreaking for the first phase will occur this fall. The state continues working to identify and design transportation improvements for this area. I continue to press for a similar study of potential northern entrances for FDA.



## Safer Neighborhoods...

The Council is once again beefing up public safety by adding 38 new police officers. This will dramatically enhance the County's community policing efforts. Two of the officers will strengthen the investigation of sex crimes against children.

The Council also took strong steps in this budget to help domestic violence victims. It added \$150,000 in funds to create an Emergency Response Team to help victims navigate the criminal justice and health and human service systems and make sure they are getting the help and protection they require. In April, the Council and County Executive dedicated the County's new shelter for domestic violence victims, the Betty Ann Krahnke Center.

Also added were nine sheriff's deputies and 28 fire/rescue workers to keep up with growth around the County.

The Basic Life Support unit at Burtonsville Volunteer Fire



Department will be converted to a fully staffed medic unit, which will provide greater coverage for Burtonsville and reduce the need for Hillandale's medic unit to respond to this area.

The Council earmarked another \$55.6 million for a new Public Radio System that will greatly improve communications for police, fire/rescue and other public safety personnel. The Management and Fiscal Policy Committee, which I chair, has been instrumental in successfully pushing this very complex project forward.

Pedestrian safety is also getting attention. Earlier this year I wrote the Chief of Police asking him to work with the Director of Public Works and Transportation to review how we can reduce pedestrian accidents. More people were killed in pedestrian accidents last year than were murdered in Montgomery County. We must press for improvements that will reduce such tragedies. Because of the heightened interest, the County Executive formed a task force on pedestrian

safety. I will keep you informed about the task force's findings and recommendations.

## Community Commitment...

Revitalizing Montgomery's older communities, along with preserving affordable housing will get a boost from the \$7.2 million commitment from the Council. This increase in the Housing Initiative Fund results from a yearlong effort by the Council to help working families and assist homeowners to improve their properties by helping with repairs and renovations. In District Four, Georgian Court will receive \$1.52 million for rehabilitation and Great Hope Homes will receive \$750,000.

## Helping Our Citizens...

As a member of the Council's Health and Human Services Committee, I have had a long-standing and deep commitment to making investments in human services for all our citizens - children, adults and seniors. The budget we just adopted will accomplish many important goals I have supported throughout my years on the Council:

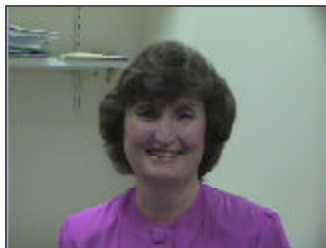
### For Children...

- Will boost the Montgomery Babies initiative, a program I spearheaded last year. At every County hospital that births babies, Montgomery General, Holy Cross, Shady



### ***Meet Claire Iseli...***

*Claire specializes in planning issues for the Praisner Office. She works part-time and is responsible for all*



*master plan, zoning, and housing matters. Please contact Claire about any concerns you may have about District Four planning issues at (240) 777-7986.*

### ***Meet Anita Epps...***

*Anita is the Legislative Administrative Aide in the Praisner Office. She oversees office administration, handles all appointments for Ms. Praisner, data base development, as well as other duties. Please feel free to contact Anita at (240) 777-7968.*



Grove Adventist and Washington Adventist, all new mothers and their infants will be offered an assessment. These voluntary screenings will identify specific needs and refer the mother and baby to services. It has been shown that giving new mothers the resources they need right from the start helps assure healthier, more well-adjusted children.

- Adds nearly \$9.5 million in services for children, including expanding school health services to provide health technician coverage at every school at least five hours per day.
- Adds 10 additional child welfare workers to investigate child abuse.
- Launches Teen Tobacco, an anti-tobacco initiative run by students in the public schools.

### ***For Seniors...***

- Adds \$75,000 extra for respite care for seniors and people with disabilities.
- Provides transportation for seniors to and from County recreation centers, including East County.
- Adds Community Health Nurses to do assisted-living inspections and investigate nursing home complaints.
- Adds \$170,000 to expand home health care services to frail elderly and those too sick to care for themselves.

### ***Water Rates to Remain Low...***

I continue to represent the Council at Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC)/County Council leadership meetings. Because of our efforts, there will be no rate increase for the third straight year. We were also instrumental

in thwarting efforts in Annapolis to privatize WSSC.

### ***A Wider View...***

While the budget has occupied much of my time recently, I continue my activities with the Maryland Association of Counties (MACo) and the National Association of Counties (NACo). In addition to serving as the County's representative on MACo's Legislative Committee, I am one of two MACo members on the Thornton Commission, a state task force organized to study and make recommendations regarding the state's education funding formulas. Recommendations are due this fall.

For NACo, I am the chair of its Human Services and Education Steering Committee and a special task force on telecommunications. I continue to serve as one of three County officials on the Federal Communications Commission's Local and State Government Advisory Committee.

### ***Meet Joy Nurmi...***

*Joy has replaced Barbara Kay Smerko as chief aide in the Praisner Office. In addition to overseeing the office, she covers health & human services, domestic violence, juvenile justice, and child welfare. Please contact Joy about any concerns you may have in District Four at (240) 777-7953.*



## Special Alert!

Every June, the Council reviews the Annual Growth Policy (AGP), a tool the County uses to ensure new development is matched with the availability of public facilities, such as roads and schools. Surprisingly, this year, the County Planning Board is proposing to lift the moratorium for jobs in the Fairland/White Oak area based on new capacity it says would be created by the construction of two grade-separated interchanges on Route 29 within five years. If this recommendation is adopted, it would allow non-residential development to proceed on a first-come/first-serve basis in this area. I have a number of concerns:

- The is the first time the AGP has considered capacity at grade-separated interchanges that do not include an interstate highway;
- Design of the interchanges will not be complete until this fall at the earliest, i.e., after the AGP is adopted;
- Preliminary design proposals for both intersections still retain traffic signals affecting east/west traffic flow;
- It appears the 6,000 jobs generated by the federal Food and Drug Administration relocation to New Hampshire Avenue have not been considered in this recommendation;

Because lifting the moratorium on jobs would lead to increased traffic congestion on already overburdened roads, I am recommending to my fellow council members that they either modify the numbers now or delay applying capacity for the interchanges until the Council undertakes its more thorough review of the AGP policy next year.



**Please Contact Us...**

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